Abigail

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Abigail

by TigerPrawn

Summary

Will and Hannibal finally discuss Abigail

For #HanniBelles, in loving memory of Abigail Hobbs.

Very Mall of America.
Wind chafed skin.
Same hair colour, same eye colour.
Roughly the same age.
Same weight, same height.
What is it about all these girls?

It's not about all these girls, it's about one of them.

"What is it Will?" Hannibal asked, coming up behind him on the street.

He was frozen to the spot, watching the silky brown hair blow in the wind as the girl turned the corner. And then she was gone.

“Nothing.” Will said, an automatic reaction. After a beat he sighed and continued, feeling Hannibal’s eyes on his back. “I saw a girl, reminded me of Abigail.”

“Hmm,” Hannibal hummed and Will tensed. “I thought Abigail was something you’d made peace with.”

Will tensed, it was one of those things that they’d had discussions around. But never direct discussions about. It had been too painful, and there were a few things Will had had to choose to live with in order to allow what was between them to blossom.

But that didn’t mean they didn’t need to have a conversation about it. Find a way to move on from it even if there was no forgiveness he could give.

“I can’t deny what’s between us, Hannibal. I’m not exactly sure what it is. But some things are going to take time.” Will replied coldly.

“You still need to heal, emotionally. Mentally.” Hannibal reassured, and Will felt the man reach for him but then stop before his hand rested on Will’s arm.

Will huffed a laugh, “Bold of you to assume I’m ever going to heal.”

“It would help to talk about her.” Hannibal urged, as he had done before. But this time Will felt his anger burning, and having seen a visage of what might have been walking ahead of him, he was unable to bury it.

“Not here,” Will muttered and Hannibal nodded.

They took a side street back to the small apartment that Hannibal had set up for them. Will was silent the whole time, but the thoughts and feelings still bubbled within him, and he felt a hypocrite for it.

Not for loving Hannibal, because he did love Hannibal. Not for being with him knowing what he was. But because he knew he had treated Abigail no better than Hannibal in some respects. They had both used her in their own ways, both hurt her one way or the other, even if the knife had been in Hannibal’s hand.

“Will-” Hannibal started as they hung up their jackets, but Will ignored him and wandered into the kitchen. He poured out two glasses of whiskey and picked one up to take a swig from before he finally started speaking.

“To you she was a protege, one you could treat as a daughter. To me,” Will shook his head. “I spent more time with her unconscious, more time with her in my head, than I did with Abigail in person. The *real* Abigail. Either that or when she was unconscious in a hospital bed, or I was.” He let out a heavy sigh and drained the glass before refilling it.

“She was a surrogate daughter to you.” Hannibal insisted “That was how you considered her.”

Will shook his head, “She didn’t think that, I wasn't a father to her. Maybe I wanted to be, maybe I wanted to help her for my own selfish reasons. If I could save her I could somehow

save myself."

"We, neither of us, were what Abigail needed, as much as we wanted to be." Hannibal sounded reassuring, as though they were talking about a wayward teen and not a young woman he had murdered.

Will huffed and drank some more whiskey before replying. "We were far from what she needed, Hannibal. We were worse than her father. And I don't just mean her death. We moulded her, just as her father did. And she shaped herself to those moulds in an act of self preservation. Hobbs destroyed who she was, and we did nothing but continue that work, when we should have-" Will shook his head. "We should have let Alana handle it. We should have listened to Alana."

"And now she'd be alive?" Hannibal countered.

"She'd be as well adjusted a young woman as she could be, considering her father. Without our interference, she could have learned to live for herself, not to placate others out of fear." Will snapped back, all too aware that Hannibal was trying to play psychiatrist on this one and he didn't appreciate that one bit.

He pushed the second glass across the counter to make this point and glared at Hannibal until he picked it up and drained half of it.

"These patterns repeat. She might have been as likely to end up in a controlling, abusive relationship. Repeating the pattern her father developed. In that sense, her death might have been inevitable." Hannibal continued.

Will balled his fist and the next he knew, it connected with Hannibal's jaw.

Hannibal gripped the counter to stop himself going down, and when he looked back to Will his hair was loose and he had a split and bloody lip.

"You say she was my protege, but that was a pleasant fiction. One that might have become a reality had things been different" Hannibal's words betrayed no emotion over having been struck but they cut nonetheless. "In another reality she might have lived. She might have been here with us."

"If *I'd* been different." Will growled, as he rubbed his knuckles.

"You mustn't blame yourself Will-"

"I blame you." Will roared, resisting the urge to hit the man again.

"Do you, Will?" The words were soft. Not a taunt, as they might have been. Because Hannibal knew the truth as well as he did himself.

With a sob Will leaned back against the counter and shook his head.

"I failed her as much as you did. She was never really herself. First she was what her dad wanted her to be, and then what you wanted. And if I'd had a chance she'd have been what I

wanted." Will was ashamed to admit it.

He could count on a little over one hand the amount of time he'd actually interacted with the girl, and yet in his mind she had become more.

A daughter. One who had followed him around the world in search of Hannibal. Every substantive interaction he'd had with her had actually been with the version of her in his mind. She had never been close to a surrogate let alone anything else.

He had wanted to be there for her, for his own selfish reasons he had wanted to save her. But in reality they were little more than strangers.

And his desire to be closer to her had delivered her into Hannibal's hands. He shook his head and continued with a quivering voice.

"She'd have been better off if I'd told Jack when I found out about Nicolas Boyle."

He remembered it well. Hannibal had known exactly what to say to get him onside. Will wasn't oblivious, he had felt the manipulation as though Hannibal's fingers had actually reached inside his brain and massaged his thoughts. But he had chosen to accept it, allowing himself to be manipulated by Hannibal's words.

We are her father's now.

"She deserved more than we allowed her." Hannibal replied. "In some ways, killing her was a mercy."

Will threw his glass down, growling as it smashed across the floor. Hannibal didn't flinch, and whilst he wasn't about to smirk, it was clear he was baiting Will whether he really meant the words or not.

He wanted an outburst, he wanted Will to get this out of his system. Will almost didn't want to give him the satisfaction, but all the same he took hold of Hannibal's shirt and slammed him against the counter.

Hannibal's glass went flying, shattering on the floor with Will's.

"Hurting me won't change anything, Will."

Will was frustrated by how unflustered Hannibal was. The man didn't fear anything. Will could hold a knife to his throat now and he wouldn't break a sweat.

"It'll make me feel better," Will snarled in response.

"Hmm, perhaps." Hannibal replied gently. "But it's not as easy as that is it? You don't just blame me for her death. You blame yourself."

Will huffed angrily, "I blame myself. I blame Jack, Alana. Her dad."

“She was destined to meet an unhappy end the moment Hobbs took her on their first hunt. There is no fault of ours there.” Hannibal reasoned.

And it did sound almost reasonable.

With a growl Will swung Hannibal around, letting him fly so that he fell to the floor and skidded across the broken glass.

Hannibal winced as he pulled himself up onto his elbows, clearly some of the glass had bitten into him, and Will certainly didn’t regret that.

Will loomed over Hannibal, who looked up at him neither cowed nor remorseful.

“Do you want forgiveness, Will? For your part in her ending?”

“Do you?” Will snapped back, fists balled.

Hannibal shook his head, “I don’t believe there is a requirement for it. And you don’t either. You will kill me or leave me, or stay with me. And no matter which you choose Abigail Hobbs and many, many others will still be dead. Some at your own hand, if you recall.”

There was no taunt in his tone, but Will felt it anyway. He had killed Tier, Dolarhyde. He had knowingly brought the Great Red Dragon down on Chilton with no care for the man’s life.

Will shook his head, “Those were a necessity.”

Hannibal cocked a brow at that. “Indeed? As Abigail was for me.”

“She was punishment,” Will spat.

“Which was a necessity. One that, as you have already said, could have been avoided.”

Will huffed a dark chuckle and shook his head, “If I’d just played the game, run away with you then, we could have all gone together and played happy families.”

“Yes. That was what you wanted.” Hannibal answered plainly.

Will stumbled back at the words and leaned against the counter.

It had been what he’d wanted. A family, something he’d never really had. People who understood him. And whether Abigail had been her father’s accomplice or victim didn’t matter, he had known she was like him. Like them.

And Hannibal had wanted to give him that. He had known what Hannibal was, and had known there would be collateral damage. He had been okay with that damage being Tier and Chilton, and who was he to have made that judgment? To say they were worth more or less than a girl he fancied to be his chance at a daughter?

Will shook his head, feeling the tears on his cheeks. “She never stood a chance. The moment she met either of us.”

With a grunt Hannibal started to get to his feet, reaching around his side and pulling out a slither of glass that had cut through shirt and flesh.

“And she is never coming back, Will. The teacup had come back together,” He dropped the glass to the floor as he stepped to Will. “But that is no longer possible. All you can do is live with it or not.”

“Live with you, you mean,” Will spat the words as his tears continued to silently flow.

“Yes. That is what I mean. As I said, you can kill me, leave me or stay, but regardless of which you choose, nothing will bring Abigail back.”

Will was surprised to see the change in Hannibal’s expression. A sadness there, a fleeting memory of something.

In all of this he had tried to ignore that Abigail had actually meant something, in some small way, to Hannibal. A protege? Perhaps, but also family, also a chance at something lost and maybe impossible. And the truth was, where Will had in reality barely known the girl and simply projected his own needs and wants on her, Hannibal had known her.

He had become close to her, spent time with her, conspired with her.

Hannibal had lost more than Will did when he’d killed Abigail. He lost something tangible, whereas Will had lost simply the idea of her. And whilst he was saddened by her death as much as he would be for anyone, the true upset was his loss. His selfishness at losing something he had wanted, he felt that abstract loss more keenly than the loss of Abigail herself.

Bile rose in Will’s stomach and he turned and wretched into the sink, bringing back up the whiskey and remembering all too well the moment he had choked up Abigail’s ear.

“Will,” Hannibal comforted softly, rubbing his back. Will didn’t protest.

After all, how much of this was really about Hannibal? He knew what Hannibal had done, he’d watched him do it. And he’d already decided he could live with it long before this day.

He just hadn’t been sure he could live with himself.

And now he knew he could.

Because in some way, he was just as bad as Hannibal. He might not have slit her throat, but he didn’t save her. There had been so many times up until that point where he could have saved her, but instead selfishly kept her in his life.

“I might as well have killed her,” Will admitted aloud, and Hannibal let out a sigh and continued to rub his back.

“We… This can’t ever happen again.” Will ground out the words through a clenched jaw. “No more people get dragged into these fucking games.”

Bile threatened to rise once more as he thought of Abigail, of Bev. Alana...

“Alright,” Hannibal agreed. “From now on, no collateral damage as far as I can promise such a thing.”

Will grit his teeth at that, at the words. At something Hannibal had told him after the fall about Alana and her place in it all.

“In that case,” He started, turning and looking intently at Hannibal. “One promise cancels another.”

Hannibal quirked a brow, and then a moment later his expression flattened and Will knew he’d realised what he was saying. What he was asking. Demanding.

“You won’t ever touch Alana. Or her family. That’s done. No collateral damage.” Will growled.

Hannibal hesitated for a moment, and then gave a curt nod. “One promise cancels the other,” he agreed.

Will felt a weight lift, relief flooding through him. Something he hadn’t expected or known he’d needed.

Hannibal was right, nothing was going to change what had happened to Abigail or bring her back. But it needn’t happen to Alana or her family. Now it wouldn’t.

Will reached up and touched the side of Hannibal’s face, the skin over his cheek bone was starting to bruise in the shape and size of Will’s fist.

“I’d say I’m sorry,” Will started gently, at which Hannibal took his hand with a chuckle and kissed his palm.

“We’d both know it to be a lie.” Hannibal smiled at him fondly, and despite everything Will knew that - right or wrong - he could live with it all.

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